



## pimpleback

*Quadrula pustulosa*

Kingdom: Animalia  
Division/Phylum: Mollusca  
Class: Bivalvia

### Features

The pimpleback mussel has a thick, rounded shell. It is brown or yellow with a green stripe with many wart-like bumps on the posterior half. The inside of the shell is pearly white. The pimpleback grows to four inches long.

### Natural History

The pimpleback lives in rivers with a mud, sand, or gravel bottom. Freshwater mussel distribution in Iowa is not well documented. They have an elaborate reproductive system. During spawning, males release sperm into the water. The sperm are drawn inside the female's shell, where they fertilize eggs in her body. The fertilized eggs develop into larvae (glochidia) and are stored for a time in the female's gills. When the glochidia mature, the female generally expels them into the water where they must attach as parasites to the gills or fins of fish. Larvae remain on the host fish for a period of weeks or months. Young mussels then detach from their host and drop to the bottom of the body of water. There are several host fish for the pimpleback mussel, mainly catfish. Mussels are filter-feeders, bringing in water and the organic matter it

contains through the incurrent siphon, filtering the particles out, then sending the rest of the water away from the body through the excurrent siphon. Particles filtered include plankton and detritus. Mature mussels spend most of their lives, which range from 10 to 100 years, partially or wholly buried in the bottom substrate.

### Habitats

interior rivers and streams; Mississippi River

### Iowa Status

common; native

### Iowa Range

northeastern two-thirds of Iowa

### Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.  
*Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.